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Critical Literature Review (ANTA602)

Prince Harry and other surface issues: Antarctic issues in UK and US newspapers

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Abstract (ca. 200 words):

Due to climate change, the fishing industry, tourism and resource extraction Antarctica has become and increasingly more common topic in mass media around the world. Despite this, and the importance given to mass media in terms of impact on public awareness and policy making, little is known about how Antarctic issues are portrayed and its influence on the public arena.

This essay looks at how four newspapers in the UK and the US portray Antarctica by comparing a sample text with existing literature on quantitative journalistic norms and values. It also compares the results with the findings of studies made on the relationship between climate change coverage and its influence on public knowledge.

There is a consensus that the general public lacks knowledge and interest in Antarctic issues, however, this assumption has no statistical evidence to back it up. This essay demonstrate that there is a possibility that the general public is uninformed, only has superficial knowledge about Antarctic issues or simply doesn't consider them to be important. But, it stresses that the need and urgency for further, in depth studies are crucial to our understanding of medias influence on the knowledge of the general public.

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1. Introduction

Due to climate change, the fishing industry, tourism and resource extraction Antarctica has become and increasingly more common topic in mass media around the world. Despite this, and the importance given to mass media in terms of impact on public awareness and policy making, little is known about how Antarctic issues are portrayed and its influence on the public arena.

This essay aimed to answer the questions; How does the media portray Antarctica and how does it influence public knowledge?

However during the research stage it was evident that there aren't, to the best of our knowledge, any studies made on the link between how the media portrays Antarctica and how that influence public knowledge.

Therefore, this critical review has examined a sample of newspaper articles in the US and the UK to find the frames used when covering Antarctic issues. This will be combined with studies on the general public's knowledge and studies on the 'laws' of journalism, particularly in regards to science journalism and climate change.

1.1 Method

In this essay I will look at media reporting climate change in two countries; the US and Britain. These two countries have certain aspects in common; they all have stations on Antarctica, are Consultative parties in the Antarctic Treaty system and they are both in proximity closer to the Arctic than the Antarctic, which gives neither an 'advantage' or 'more likeliness' to report on Antarctic issues than the other. This problem would arise if we would have chosen to compare New Zealand with a northern hemisphere country of similar size and population, say for example Norway.

This essay will look at the two most popular newspapers in UK, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail*, the former representing the right wing and the second representing the left wing world view – however, the distinction between the two could arguably have more to do with one being broadsheet and the other being tabloid paper. The Daily mail reaches 4.741 million readers and The Guardian 1.103 million according to the National Readership Survey, making them some of the most well read newspapers in the UK (MediaUK 2011).

In regards to the US we will be looking at *The New York Times* and *USA Today* for similar reasons. USA Today belongs to the tabloid papers and The New York Times to broadsheet. In the US these two newspapers are amongst the biggest, with their circulation numbers ranking the second and third biggest print newspapers in the country. Their online presence is great as well, with The New York Times being the most read online newspaper and USA Today listed on a 6th place (AAM 2011; Onlinenewspapers.com 2013). My test sample will use all articles published by these four newspapers during October and November 2013. I chose these two months because during October 2013 CCAMLR had a meeting on protected marine reserves in the Ross Sea and the US shut down their bases in the Antarctic, topics which I initially expect will result in a lot of coverage. I chose November as a 'neutral' month.

It is interesting to notice that the most read online newspaper in the world, is in fact the British

tabloid paper The Daily Mail, or *Mail Online* as their online site is called, which attracted over 50 million people to its site during one month in 2012. The second largest online newspaper, The New York Times, with around 48,7 million visitors the same month, and the third largest The Guardian reaching almost 39 million people, will also be covered in this study (comScore, 2012).

This essay will examine the quantitative aspect of the test sample and compared them to recognised journalistic filters as well as create a general overview of what they have reported on.

This study has its base in media science, along with a number of studies concerned with the relationship between medias coverage of climate change and the general public's knowledge thereof.

2. What do the media report on, and how often?

The topic which received the most attention during the period of the test sample was Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded to the South Pole - taking up 17 (34%) of 50 articles.

Otherwise there was 13 articles on political issues (26%), 9 on scientific issues, 9 on travel, 6 personal interviews, 8 relating to the environment, 1 on history, 1 on economics and 2 under 'other'.

UK newspapers publish a substantially higher number of articles during the test period, 41 vs 9 from the US newspapers.

The US newspapers had with their limited cover a general focus on science and politics, while the UK newspapers showed a greater span of subjects.

The UK newspapers give greater attention to travel in Antarctica, and does so in a non-critical way. The tabloid newspapers, both UK and US, had more articles on science than did the broadsheet. The broadsheets in both the UK and the US covered, once only for the latter and five times for the former, the CCMLAR meeting, but the tabloid newspapers did not.

In regards to the subjects covered, I gave a hypothesis at the start of the essay that the events of October (the CCMLAR meeting and the shutdown of US research stations) would be the main stories of the month. The US shutdown was covered only 5 times during October, three in the Guardian and once each in the two US newspapers.

The CCMLAR meeting gathered slightly higher interest with 6 published stories, by both of the two broadsheet newspapers - The Guardian and The New York Times.

To my surprise, the month of November saw the greatest amount of articles published (with all magazines except The New York Times, which has had a constant of 2 articles or less per month throughout the year). This had a clear correlation to Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded. The story attracted the most attention with the UK newspapers, which is in line with the attention the royal family attract in UK media.

However, it is important to notice that the vast majority of the coverage of the prince's trip was in UK newspapers and due to their much larger stake in the overall media attention to Antarctic issues it became the most popular topic during the test period.

Hypothetically the readers of the Guardian (assuming that the readers have no prior knowledge of, read all of the articles and have no other input of information on Antarctic issues) will know more about the political and environmental issues but less of the science on the continent than their fellow readers at Mail Online.

Both will know that Prince Harry is on the ice (though the readers of Mail Online will also know what he is eating and what his girlfriend back in the UK is doing) and have a fair knowledge of how to travel as a tourist to Antarctica.

In comparison to their hypothetical counter parts of the two US newspapers, they will have a broader sense of subjects that relates to Antarctica, simply because the Antarctic issues covered in the UK newspapers have a greater span.

The US hypothetical readers will most likely have limited knowledge and feel less connected to Antarctica simply due to the smaller amount of articles published.

There are a number of journalistic norms and values that are important to consider when discussing how Antarctica is portrayed and how that might impact the image of Antarctica and its issues in the mind of the reader.

Quantity and quality, balance and objectivity, personalization and drama - nicknamed infotainment - novelty, visual frames, journalists' specialization or lack thereof and pressure of deadlines and space (in terms of word count or air time) are factors that determine if an issue is covered or not and how an issue is portrayed (Boykoff et al, 2007 [1]; Corbett, et al 2004; Neverla, 2008).

When we examine the information of the sample test it fits well with the existing norms and values.

Mazur has argued that it is the quantity of news coverage, not the quality of the content, that is the most important process in communication (1998). It affects understanding of an issue simply by implying that an issue that is covered a lot is more important than an issue that is not as well covered (Good, 2008). In terms of quantity the UK newspapers exceed those in the US. If the test sample would prove to be statistically viable that would indicate that the US media and the general public don't consider Antarctic issues to be important.

Visual framing is another recognised journalistic norm and stories with visuals attract more readers (McCombs, 2004). Visual elements exist across both countries, all issues and newspapers but with various weight to them. If the subject isn't illustrated with a issue-specific image or graph then a

stereotypical image of the Emperor penguin on an ice sheet is shown.

Personalization of Antarctic issues can be clearly seen in the test sample. Both in terms of the attention to Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded, which attracts a high quantity of coverage, and in terms of framing articles around a person. However in the case of The New York Time's article *Finding Inspiration Through Exploration* the article discusses political and environmental issues within the article.

Nerverla points out that celebrities has helped bring climate change into the media light by fulfilling this journalistic filter. However, she argues it only brings quantity not quality to the discussion. (2008). Many agree that that this personalization brings attention way from the real issues and favours what happens at the surface of events. This has especially been argued for climate change issues (Boykoff et al, 2007 [1]; Corbett et al, 2004).

Norms such as balance and context as well as dramatization are qualitative values and will not be discussed in this essay due to limited word count. Some of these filters are in place to ensure fair, truthful and valid reporting but can have the very opposite effect. For example, to balance a story the journalist might give equal weight to a scientist or non-scientist (such as an organisation, politician or company) with an opposing view, even though they might have a bias. By giving the opposition an equal space lends to the impression that the two sides have equal value even though evidence might show differently. The debate about humans contribution to climate change in the US is one such example (Corbett et al, 2004).

In a study of television and newspaper coverage Boykoff and Boykoff finds that all of these norms and values have created a vacuum in the US mass media on the issue of human induced climate change (Boykoff et al, 2007 [1]).

3. What do the general public know? And do they care?

According to the survey done in the US, people have knowledge about Antarctic issues however the span of the knowledge is limited. There is a clear connection between how much you know and how much you care about Antarctica, simply the more you know the more you care. However, ideology can be a powerful filter both in terms of a persons personal world view and that of the media they consume (Hamilton, 2008). This is also true if we look beyond the Antarctic. For example in regards to the issue of climate change, in 2001 the National Science Foundation did a survey and found that 77% believed that global warming was happening, a percentage that increased according to level of education (Corbett et al, 2004).

The follow up study done in 2010 show's a major increase in the publics general knowledge of

Antarctica. Even though men tend to have a higher score on polar questions, the biggest increase in knowledge came from women. This trend, according to the study, had no effected peoples' concerns.

The study, which compared knowledge of polar issues from 2006 and 2010, came to the conclusion that “IPY (International Polar Year) was successful in raising awareness” (Hamilton et al, 2012, p.3). Even though the study shows a slight increase in knowledge about polar regions among its participants it doesn't ask, prove or even suggest how the campaigns of the IPY effected their knowledge. And so renders the statement insignificant or even false. Under the 'conclusion' of the study this ambiguity is touched but the study holds on to its previous statement.

In regards to the question of reserving Antarctica for science the study shows no increase among the cross-section participants representing the general public, the figure was a steady 46%. However, the panel respondents who was asked the same question both in 2006 and 2010 showed an increase of 7%, raising the number to just over 50%. Again the study suggests that this is a proof of success of the IPY without showing any connection to the campaigns and work of or during the IPY. It also carries a cultural bias suggesting, without stating it, that an increase in wanting to reserving Antarctica for science is 'good' or 'positive' and so rendering the opposite as 'bad' or 'negative'. The simplicity of the questions and the bias of the writers excludes the other 54% and 49% of people who might not oppose opening up Antarctica for commercial purposes yet might still want strong environmental policies in place if it happens. Or, perhaps they want the continent opened up for specific commercial purposes, for example tourism (which in fact Antarctica is already open for) but not for resource extraction (Hamilton et al, 2012).

The study suggest that polar issues in the US are “increasingly viewed by the public through politically tinted glasses” (Hamilton et al, 2012, p.6) which is showed in a political divide between those who want to reserve Antarctica for science and those who don't. However these finding are not reported in any graphs or statistical figures (Hamilton et al, 2012).

If we have a look at mass-media's influence on the general public in regards to science Corbett and Durfee suggests that mass-media plays a positive part in understanding issues. However, knowledge of or even understanding of an issue, may it be climate change or the Antarctic, has no direct relation to how much we care (Corbett et al, 2004; Hamilton et al, 2012; Gooch, 1996).

Another national survey in the US, conducted in 1997 before and after the debate around the Kyoto Protocol, showed that even though the issue attracted the interest of the general public it did more to strengthen already existing views and beliefs and resulted in almost no change in public opinion about climate change (Krosnick et al, 2000).

4. Conclusions

In a Swedish study focusing on the impact of regional newspapers, Gooch found that the print media has an important role to play as “disseminators” (1996). Others agree claiming that “the public understands science less through direct experience or past education than through the filter of journalistic language and imagery” (Corbett et al, 2004).

“Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” is a common phrase used in natural science when it comes to assumptions which has yet to be proven. The general consensus among scientists, politicians and others working in Antarctica or with Antarctic issues is that the general public has a low and inadequate understanding of what is going on in the continent. The mass media is also often accused of failing in their role as a portal between science and Antarctica.

Journalism works with certain filters and constraints. These are called norms or values and can be divided up in quantitative or qualitative. In this study a test sample was made from two US and two UK newspapers and compared them to the quantitative norms recognised within journalism. They fit well with the consensus.

As a hypothetical example this essay shows a gap between the amount of Antarctic issues covered in UK vs the US. It also shows that 70% of the articles during the period did not cover science related, political, economical or environmental issues. Both these figures suggests a readership which either lacks confidence that Antarctic issues are important or know more about surface events than the underlying issues.

The test sample is by no means comprehensive and is, due to its size, a limited representative sample. It merely acts as an example of what patterns could arise when a more in depth study is done. The argument that quantity of news coverage is as important to the reader as the quality of the content and due to the limited word count in this essay we have focused on the quantitative norms and values. There is therefore a need to look into the quantitative aspect of news coverage as well. There needs to be much more research into this subject, both on the general public's knowledge and how they access information before we can make any statements regarding their lack of knowledge or blaming the mass media for this potential lack. There is of today no comprehensive study done on the subject. It is crucial for the outreach efforts of scientists, organisations, politicians and others working with the Antarctic to understand the effect of various mediums on the general public's knowledge and care of the issues.

Hopefully we can take comfort in the many similar studies made in many different countries around the world on the patterns of media covering climate change and its effect on the knowledge of the general public.

According to a study by Boycoff and Rajan on newspaper coverage of climate change in the UK

and the US, the UK newspapers show much greater attention to the issue (2007 [2]). Even though our test sample has many limitations it shows a similar pattern. The study argues that there exist an “attitude of denial” (Boycoff et al, 2007, [2] p.208) in the US in terms of manmade climate change and that this could be connected to the political capitalist system (Boycoff et al, 2007 [2]). This statement would be easy to make on the general knowledge of US politics today but irrelevant since Boycoff and Rajan shows no statistical proof.

There are many such external factors that influence media coverage. These factors, such as political climate, influence of lobby groups, policy change, ownership of the media and cultural values are important factors in today's media industry and requires further research in relation to the Antarctic and many other single-issue subjects (Boycoff et al, 2007 [2]; Curran et al, 2009; Herman et al, 1988)

Boycoff and Boycoff makes an interesting and worrying statement, the journalistic norms addressed above, “is part of a process that eventuates in informationally biased coverage...” (Boycoff et al 2007 [1] p.1201).

With this essay the lack of evidence for or against claims of an uniformed public is made clear. As well as the eminent importance of such studies and their resulting understanding to be made.

Test Sample

Guardian

October 2013:

10 articles in total

2 articles on US shutdown: POLITICAL

3 articles on CCMLAR marine reserves: POLITICAL & ENVIRONMENT

2 articles on Metallica's concert: CELEBRITIES

1 article on Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded: CELEBRITIES

1 article on a painter onboard the Aurora Australis ship: PEOPLE & TRAVEL

1 article on both US shutdown and CCMLAR marine reserves: POLITICAL & ENVIRONMENT

November 2013:

7 articles in total

1 photo story on extreme skiing in Antarctica: PEOPLE & TRAVEL

1 article on Prince Harry leaving for Antarctica: CELEBRITIES

1 article on a painter onboard the Aurora Australis ship: PEOPLE & TRAVEL

1 article on CCMLAR marine reserves: POLITICS & ENVIRONMENT

1 article on Chinas resource interests in Antarctica: POLITICS

1 article on the penguin eggs taken back by Captain Scott's expedition: HISTORY

1 interview with an explorer: PEOPLE

TOTAL AMOUNT OF ARTICLES: 17

PEOPLE: total 4

TRAVEL: total 3

POLITICAL: total 9

october: 7 november: 2

CELEBRITIES: total 4

october: 3 november: 1

HISTORICAL: total 1

november

ENVIRONMENT: total 5

all on marine reserves

SCIENCE: none solely scientific.

ECONIMICS: none.

VISUAL ELEMENTS: One image or graphic for all articles.

Mail Online

October 2013:

4 articles in total

2 articles on travel (cruise, photos on of many): TRAVEL

1 articles on google earth safari (antarctica one of many): TRAVEL

1 articles on ice shelf melting: SCIENCE

November 2013:

20 articles in total

1 article on extreme skiing in Antarctica: TRAVEL

11 articles on Prince Harry and the Walk for the Wounded: CELEBRITIES

1 article on Active volcano: SCIENCE

1 article on travelling in Antarctica: TRAVEL

1 article on seals crushing a documentary filmers' tent: OTHER

1 article on tracking ice shelf that broke off: SCIENCE & ECONOMICS

1 article on 14 year old marathon runner (Antarctica being on of the places): OTHER

1 article on sea level rise (Antarctica part of the story): SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

1 article on isotopes: SCIENCE

TOTAL AMOUNT OF ARTICLES: 24

PEOPLE: None.

TRAVEL: total 5

POLITICAL: None.

CELEBRITIES: total 11

all in november, all to do with Prince Harry.

HISTORICAL: None.

ENVIRONMENT: total 1
on sea level rise.

SCIENCE: 5
isotopes, sea level, ice shelf, active volcano, ice shelf melting

ECONOMICS: 1
ice shelf into ship transit.

OTHER: 2
14 year old marathon runner & seals crushing a tent

VISUAL ELEMENTS: In all articles, often more than one, also videos.

The New York Times

October 2013:

2 articles in total

1 articles on travel and conservation, interview with cruise ship leader: TRAVEL, PEOPLE,
ENVIRONMENT and POLITICS

1 articles on US shutdown: POLITICS

November 2013:

2 articles in total – seems to be a trend!

1 article on space science: SCIENCE

1 article on CCMLAR marine reserves: POLITICS and ENVIRONMENT

TOTAL AMOUNT OF ARTICLES: 4

PEOPLE: total 1

TRAVEL: total 1

POLITICAL: total 3
on marine reserves

CELEBRITIES: total 0

HISTORICAL: None.

ENVIRONMENT: total 2
on marine reserves

SCIENCE: 1

ECONOMICS: 0

VISUAL ELEMENTS: Two visual elements, often images, per article.

USA Today

October 2013:

1 articles in total

1 article on science vs US shutdown: SCIENCE and POLITICS

November 2013:

4 articles in total

1 photo story on amazing discoveries this week (antarctic iceberg only one part): SCIENCE

2 article on Prince Harry's trip: CELEBRITIES

1 interview with climate change scientists: PEOPLE and SCIENCE

TOTAL AMOUNT OF ARTICLES: 5

PEOPLE: total 1

TRAVEL: None.

POLITICAL: total 1

US shutdown

CELEBRITIES: total 2

Prince Harry

HISTORICAL: None.

ENVIRONMENT: None.

SCIENCE: total 3

one a 'fight' between science and politics.

ECONIMICS: none.

VISUAL ELEMENTS: At least one visual element to every article, often an image though not very prominent.

General conclusion on sample

UK newspapers publish a substantially higher number of articles during the test period - 41 vs 9.

Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded to the South Pole was the most popular subject during this time - taking up 17 (34%) of 50 articles.

Otherwise there was 13 articles on political issues (26%), 9 on scientific issues, 9 on travel, 6 personal interviews, 8 on the environment, 2 on other, 1 on history, 1 on economics.

The US newspapers had with their limited cover a general focus on science and politics, however the Guardian wrote 3 articles on the US base shut down when USA Today and The New York Times only wrote one each.

The UK newspapers give greater attention to travel in Antarctica, and does so in a non-critical way. The tabloid newspapers, both UK and US, had more articles on science than did the broadsheet. The broadsheets in both the UK and the US covered, once only for the latter and five times for the former, the CCMLAR meeting, but the tabloid newspapers did not.

Visual elements exists across both countries, all issues and newspapers but with various weight to

them. If the subject isn't illustrated with a issue-specific image or graph then a stereotypical image of the Emperor penguin on an ice sheet is shown.

Images are more popular than graphs.

In regards to the subjects covered, I gave a hypothesis at the start of the essay that the events of October (the CCMLAR meeting and the shutdown of US research stations) would be the main stories of the month. The US shutdown was covered only 5 times during October, three in the Guardian and once each in the two US newspapers.

The CCMLAR meeting gathered slightly higher interest with 6 published stories.

To my surprise, the month of November saw the greatest amount of articles published (with all magazines except The New York Times, which has had a constant of 2 articles or less per month throughout the year). This had a clear correlation to Prince Harry's Walk with the Wounded. The story attracted the most attention in the UK (as expected because it is their prince). However, it is important to notice that the vast majority of the coverage of the Prince's trip was in UK newspapers and due to their much larger stake in the overall media attention to Antarctic issues.

Hypothetically the readers of the Guardian (assuming that the readers have no prior knowledge , read all of their articles and have no other input of information on Antarctic issues) will know more about the political and environmental issues but less of the science on the continent than their fellow readers at Mail Online.

Both will know that Prince Harry is on the ice (though the readers of Mail Online will also know what he is eating and what his girlfriend back in the UK is doing) and have a fair knowledge of travel in Antarctica.

In comparison to the hypothetical readers of the two US newspapers, they will have a broader sense of subjects that relates to Antarctica, because the Antarctic issues covered in the UK newspapers have a greater span.

The US hypothetical readers will most likely have limited knowledgable and feel less connected to Antarctica simply due to the smaller amount coverage.

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